

Remarks

By the present amendment and response, Applicants have canceled claim 20 and amended claims 21 and 56-58. Consequently, claims 5, 7-10, 13, 14, 21, 24-27, 30, 32, 33, 36, and 42-61 are pending in the present application with claims 5, 7, 24, 25, 30, 36, and 56 being independent claims. Remarks addressing the objections and 35 U.S.C. § 102 rejections contained in the Office Action mailed December 17, 2003 are set forth in turn below.

Objection to Claim Depending from Rejected Base Claim (Allowable Subject Matter)

Claim 56 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim (i.e., claim 20), but the Examiner indicated that claim 56 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. (Office Action at 3.) In response to the Examiner's statement, claim 56 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of previously presented claim 20. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to claim 56 is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 20, 21, and 57-61 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,577,793 to Vaganov.

Since claim 20 has been canceled by the present amendment, the rejection of claim 20 is believed to be moot.

As previously presented, claims 21 and 57-61 used to depend, either directly or indirectly, from claim 20. By virtue of the present amendment, however, all of these claims 21 and 57-61 now depend, whether directly or indirectly, from amended claim 56 (i.e., amended claims 21 and 58 depend from amended claim 56, while amended claims 59 – 61

depend from amended claim 58). Since the Examiner indicated that claim 56 would be allowable in if rewritten in independent form – and claim 56 has been amended in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion – it is believed that amended claims 21 and 57-61 should now be allowable. Accordingly, withdrawal of the § 102(e) rejections of claims 21 and 57-61 is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

By virtue of the amendment and arguments stated herein, Applicants believe that all pending claims 5, 7-10, 13, 14, 21, 24-27, 30, 32, 33, 36, and 42-61 are in good condition for allowance, and respectfully request allowance thereof. Consideration of the enclosed Information Disclosure Statement is also requested. If, for some reason, a notice of allowance cannot be envisaged after consideration of the present Amendment, a telephone call with the undersigned at (626) 351-8200 ext. 6503 to discuss any deficiencies would be earnestly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

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